

SUMMARIUM

EUROPEAN UNION

After one and a half decades of expectations and preparations, the European Union does not mean the mysterious object of a “wish” – or contrary, of an anxiety – for Hungarian citizens, but a reality experienced more and more directly, even in the sphere of education. Our country has made great efforts in order to get better acquainted with the functions of the community of countries integrating the “Westerner” territories of our continent. Scientists have significantly contributed to this work, due to various requests from work committees supported by the government. In the phase preceding the enlargement, efforts to get more information about the European Union have mainly led to the production of descriptive presentations. The reason for this probably lies in the fact that the adhering countries have to accept most of the previous “achievements” of the EU (or in the EU-slang: the *acquis communautaire*) – except for some temporary decisions delaying certain matters. However, this is not surprising, because the main question for analysts has been: which solutions does our country have to adapt to, which are the mechanisms we have to assume ourselves?

The situation has changed completely by now, as since Hungary has joined the European Union, the Hungarian educational decision-makers, the opinion leaders, or simple citizens, and indirectly every interest group have the right to influence and also an interest in influencing the mechanisms of the Union. These mechanisms will have an impact on their own activity and on the formation of their life chances, their own larger or narrower environment. It also is an advantage if those entering the Union have a clear picture about the way the system of organizations work, about the advantages and disadvantages of the applied solutions, and it is also important that they are able to give innovative solutions when necessary. Nevertheless, this is not at all easy, because meritorious opinions are needed about the way a fairly complex system of institutions work, about its priorities, and about the solutions sought in order to carry out the priorities set forward by the institutions.

For the realization of all these it would be helpful if those who adopt a mostly descriptive approach in their analyses could mobilize the approaches of modern social sciences (economical science, sociology, political science, discourse analysis, etc.) in a creative way, approaches that were originally formed precisely for the analysis of local or national processes at work.

In the present edition of the journal *Educatio*, at its second issue with the topic about the European integration, we have not only considered essential articles which, as we said before, discuss the latest developments, but we also intended to raise the critical tone of the analyses, and to widen the range of approaches integrated by the authors.

The author of the opening article, Géza Sáska in his study *Ideas of Europe* places the educational changes in a wider social-historical context, and raises our attention to the influences that foreign solutions have played in the Hungarian educational developments in the past and in the present. He also states that contingency has had a major role in the process of model selection. While after 1958 we had to adopt various kinds of educational solutions as a corollary of the dependency from the Soviet Union, the consolidated era of the state socialism made it possible what later the change of regime made dominant: the orientation towards the West. However, it seems that this solution does not lack drawbacks either. In some cases the fairly arbitrary adaptation of foreign models only serves the underpinning of specific objectives of internal policies. Moreover, many propose the import of certain solutions without considering the main characteristics of the social environment the chosen model has been created in. The choice of models is also limited by the experts' restricted language competencies, and by the fact that Hungarian experts in education and pedagogy have almost no knowledge about the education system of other countries from our continent. This could create serious problems. The second part of this study tries to provide help to nuance the rather compact image of Europe by designing a typology based on regional partitioning. The centralized or decentralized character of the administration, certain denominational features, etc. have played central role in the separation of regions the socio-historical factors. In the closing part of the article the author

makes a comparison between the results of the controversial PISA-survey on the reading-comprehension skills, and data about 19th century analphabetism. He calls attention to the continuity in the rank each country occupies in these lists, pointing to the fact that the efficiency of educational processes is as much determined by the attitude of the citizens towards culture as by the characteristics of educational system.

While reading the study *The European coordination of national educational policies* by Gábor Halász the reader faces the fact that a new form of cooperation is now gaining ground, which will most probably have a certain harmonizing effect in the future. This might be so even if the basic EU documents still contain phrases saying that the principle of subsidiarity should play a central role in education. The main objective of the article is to present the Open Coordination Method, which has long become best practice in the EU employment policy and should now be applied in the education sector. This method – so far adopted and well appreciated mainly in adult education and lifelong learning – is based on the identification of common action lines, on fixing of indexes and standards that support results evaluation, and on the preparation of evaluations that are starting points for discussions on the level of the European Union. The above mentioned method illustrates a model for the variety of new, cooperation-based ways of administration, known under the name of “governance”. The article and a review published in this issue both inform us about the disputes and disagreements following the application of the new method, moreover, we get new angles to assessing the changes from the viewpoint of national sovereignty.

The article *Public education as a contributing factor to the human resource development – EU constraint or change of paradigm* by Éva Balázs presents the economic, social and political challenges that directed educational issues towards the priority issues in the EU policy. While in the beginning education has played only a marginal role, and was restricted mostly to vocational training, by today, due to rapid structural changes in economy and the revaluation of social solidarity principles on the continent, it has become a priority area. A large part of the article contains a portrayal of the human resource demands of presently emerging knowledge-based economies. Highlighting the concept of “learning regions and towns”, the article mentions the newest model of regional development that enhances the aspects of social cohesion. At the end of the article the author recognizes that, compared to other socializing agents, school has lost a great deal of importance. Nevertheless, she also emphasizes that institutions providing public education forced to adapt to small-scale regional demands have an increasing role in the formation of key competencies, the provision of equal access to knowledge, and the integration of a multitude of information.

The article by Éva Tót: *The effectiveness of participating in European programs* intends to review the results of different European programs available for Hungarian citizens even before joining the EU (for example different sub-programs of the Socrates and the Leonardo programs). The author made a thorough enquiry based on several evaluations of similar topics, which resulted in the conclusion that cooperation among schools and granting foreign scholarships have had a positive impact on participants’ foreign language learning, because it raised the willingness to learn foreign languages. This is an important result in a country where foreign language competency is at a very low level. The analysis reveals that participation in these programs is limited for certain institutions: the level of foreign language competency, bureaucratic formalities, the delay of scholarships, lack of individual funds, the low appreciation of the work of key actors in the activity, etc. make participation difficult. It is probably these hardships that are to be blamed for the low level of participating institutions. Only 5–7 % of public institutions are linked to EU educational programs, motivated by the hope to improve their relative positions in the competition with other institutions. The author refers several times to the central measures necessary in order to improve the level of participation of institutions. These measures should reach the organizations that contribute to the implementation of EU programs in Hungary, or those that are active in teacher-training.

In his article *Operational Program for Human Resource Development and the education of Roma children* Péter Radó scrutinizes the way the above mentioned document contributes to the social integration of Roma children living in particularly bad conditions in Hungary. The study, an adaptation of an expertise written in the starting phase of the program, emphasizes that the strategy of development was a well-conceived plan compared to the preceding ones, and due to this plan more funding will be available for the elimination of problems in the education of Roma children. Nevertheless,

the author points to the difficulties of planning, and to the problems originating in the fact that the complex examination of the conditions Roma live in has not yet been made. Another problem is, that many possible links remained unelaborated, even if the program seeks to facilitate concerted actions of institutions from different sectors of activity (like employment, social, health, education, human rights and minority rights). As the writer puts it: the document is nothing but a compilation of different governmental programs.

Informing about a research supported by the European Union, the article *Equality of educational opportunity and education policy in five European countries* written by Iván Bajomi, Gábor Berkovits, Gábor Erőss and Anna Imre demonstrates how discourses and concrete steps on equity have changed in the five examined countries (Belgium, France, England, Portugal and Hungary). The study takes into account several aspects of equity, from the structure of school system through the help provided to school-teachers to teacher training. It outlines the fact that although every country displays several institutional solutions, the network of institutional solutions supporting equity is more consistent in countries occupying a central position than in the less developed Portugal and Hungary.

(Text of Iván Bajomi – translated by Ágota Szentannai)

EUROPÄISCHE UNION

Die Europäische Union ist für den ungarischen Bürger nach eineinhalb Jahrzehntelangen Vorbereitungen und fast endlos erscheinendem Warten nicht mehr Gegenstand eines geheimnisvollen Wunschtraums (oder ganz im Gegenteil, eines Alptraums), sondern sie ist auf vielen Gebieten, wie zum Beispiel im Unterrichtswesen, zu einer unmittelbar erfahrbaren Tatsache geworden. Um die Funktionsweise des bislang nur den westlichen Teil des Kontinents integrierenden Staatsgebildes besser kennenzulernen wurde viel Aufklärungsarbeit in unserem Land geleistet. An dieser Arbeit hat sich auch die einheimische Wissenschaftlergemeinschaft beteiligt, unter anderem infolge der Aufrufe die von Seiten der verschiedenen, von der Regierung unterstützten Arbeitskreisen an den Wissenschaftssektor gerichtet wurden. Bis kurz vor der EU-Erweiterung sind viele, überwiegend deskriptive Beiträge zum Thema Europäische Union erschienen, was zum Teil auch der Tatsache zu verdanken ist, dass die neuen Mitgliedstaaten die im Fachjargon „*acquis communautaire*“ genannten „Errungenschaften“ der EU im vollen Maße (abgesehen von den Ausnahmefällen, wo eine Anpassung an die EU-Richtlinien weiter aufgeschoben wurde) übernehmen müssen. Die überwiegende Mehrheit solcher Schriften sollte aber schon nur deshalb nicht überraschen, weil für die Analytiker die Hauptfrage meistens darin bestand, welche Art von Lösungen Ungarn übernehmen wird, bzw. an welche Mechanismen der Union sich Ungarn anpassen muss.

Heute hat sich diese Lage grundsätzlich verändert, da seit dem EU-Beitritt die Leiter des ungarischen Unterrichtswesens (und indirekt auch jeder interessierte Ungar, egal ob Politiker oder „einfacher Bürger“), das Interesse und das Recht haben, sich an der Gestaltung ihrer eigenen Tätigkeit, an der Bestimmung der eigenen Lebenschancen oder an der Formung der Mechanismen die ihr näheres oder weiteres Umfeld beeinflussen, zu beteiligen. Es schadet daher nicht, wenn zukünftige EU-Bürger und Mitgestalter ein klares Bild über die Funktionsweise der einzelnen EU-Institutionen und über die Vorteile und Nachteile der dort angewandten Lösungen haben, wobei es allerdings genauso wichtig ist, dass sie ab und zu auch eigene Vorschläge zu neuen Lösungen durchsetzen können. Dies wiederum ist nicht einfach, da sie ihre Meinung zur Funktionsweise eines sehr komplexen, vom einfachen Bürger sehr weit entfernt gelegenen System von Institutionen, Prioritäten und institutionellen Lösungen äußern müssen.

Es könnte daher hilfreich sein, wenn diejenigen, die sich bis jetzt mit der pur deskriptiven Beschreibung der Union befasst haben, die verschiedenen, bislang nur zur Analyse lokaler oder nationaler Vorgänge eingesetzten Ansätze der modernen Sozialwissenschaften (Volkswirtschaftskunde, Soziologie, Politologie, Diskursforschung, usw.), konstruktiv mobilisieren könnten.

Bei der Redaktion dieser zweiten Nummer der *Educatio* die sich mit der europäischen Integration beschäftigt haben wir es für wichtig gehalten, dass nicht nur deskriptive Aufsätze zum Thema „Neue